**Food Fights: Analysis of Global Food Policy Issues**

Agricultural & Applied Economics 2710

2:20-3:35pm T/Th

Spring Semester, 2021

Location: Synchronous Online ([Zoom](https://zoom.us/j/92121622514?pwd=amlCZzh2NW5FUlNXQTFkVGx5T1pIdz09))

Professor: Ellen McCullough

Assistant Professor

Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics

Conner Hall, Office 315A

Phone: (706) 542 0765

Email: [emccullough@uga.edu](mailto:emccullough@uga.edu)

Office Hours:[[1]](#footnote-1) via [Zoom](https://zoom.us/j/91939173478); Tuesdays 3:45pm-5:00pm; Wednesdays 2:45-4:00pm (or by appointment)

TA: Dhiraj Bhatta

Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics

Email: dhiraj.bhatta@uga.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

***Food Fights*** explores issues in the global food system through the lens of economics and policy analysis, following a case study approach. Each case study introduces a basic economics concept and presents a policy trade-off for students to analyze.

There are no course prerequisites. You will learn new economics concepts and apply them to real world policy issues. Please see me if you have any concerns about whether this course is appropriate for you.

Student performance in this course will be determined through regular in-class quizzes, brief essays, and participation in an in-class debate. There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam, which will focus on applying the economics concepts that are introduced in class towards policy controversies.

In-class engagement 20%

Essays (one per module) 50%

New topic assignments (one per module) 20%

Debate (you will sign up for 1 during the semester) 10%

**Course learning goals:** By the end of the semester, my hope is that you will:

1. Learn basic elements of policy analysis and economic reasoning.
2. Gain strong awareness of key policy issues facing the global food system.
3. Increase your media literacy.
4. Become better equipped to evaluate future policy and consumer choices.

**Course Policies**

*Attendance and participation:*

Regular attendance and full participation is expected of all enrolled students. I do not factor attendance directly into your grade, but I DO expect you to participate in lectures in real time and keep up with readings. Lectures are highly interactive. I will regularly assign questions during class using eLC and other free online tools. These include quizzes over assigned reading or lecture material, practice problems, and discussion of lecture material. These questions will be embedded in lectures and must be answered in real time, so pay close attention!

***My expectations for your online etiquette include the following:*** always share your video display and mute your audio unless speaking. I reserve the right to call on any student at any time. Please do not distract others with your zoom background (e.g., no virtual backgrounds that use video). Please put your cell phone away - no texting or tik tok or other distractions during lecture. I assure you we are all much worse at multitasking than we think we are. There’s no point in dialing in just for the sake of attendance. If you come to class, come to class.

I do not take attendance for the sake of taking attendance. Therefore, I do not ask you to inform me about or provide excuses for absence assuming fewer than 7 lectures are affected. If you are participating in a university activity that will result in a large number of excused absences, please email me with a list of the dates *in advance of your planned absence*. I cannot accommodate excuses that are reported after the absence took place. In the case of extended illness or a personal or family emergency, please reach out to me regarding extended absences as soon as you are able. I’ll do my best to accommodate your circumstances, and I may ask for additional documentation.

It is your responsibility to inform yourself about any announcements made during lectures – missing class is not an excuse for missing announcements made during class.

It can be hard for me to gauge your distance learning experience. *Please* share feedback about any technical issues (e.g., if you have difficulty seeing slides, hearing me, or hearing/seeing student discussions). I’m very happy to troubleshoot any and all issues in order to improve your experience. Your feedback and suggestions are always welcome!

*Course materials*

Assigned readings for each module are listed in eLC. All readings are available to you at no additional charge. You will need Zoom to access course lectures, and your ability to participate in video and audio discussions is required. I may make use of additional platforms to engage you in discussions and activities. These will not result in any cost to you.

*Academic Integrity*

I strictly enforce University of Georgia’s code of academic integrity. UGA Student Honor Code states: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi. Additionally, these policies are in effect:

* It is a violation of course policy to seek unauthorized assistance on any essay, or to pass of anyone else’s writing as your own. Failing to cite sources or attribute ideas or quotations is a violation of academic integrity.
* It is a violation of course policy to consult classmates on any assessments during class unless I provide explicit permission for you to do so.

*Assessment*

* In-class Engagement (20%)

The “Engagement” portion of your grade is based on your average score on all interactive activities including group activities assigned during lectures. I will calculate your engagement grade based on the share of points assigned that you receive during each class period. I will drop the lowest 7 grades (that’s 25% of the lectures). If you miss an activity, you will receive zero points for that activity.   
The lowest-7 cutoff does *not* mean it is acceptable for you to only attend 75% of the lectures. It means that you are adults and you should make your own decisions about attending class. My goal is not for you to log in and tune out – my goal is engaged learning.

* *Essays (50%)*

For each of the five modules (see outline below), you will be expected to submit one brief (400-500 word) essay in which you take a position on the policy controversies that we discuss in class. You are free to select the policy controversy that corresponds with any of the three topics presented in each the module. The essay for each module will be due one week after the last lecture for the module. Please see the essay guide for detailed guidelines about the essay assignments.

* New Topic Assignments (20%)

Also for each of the five modules, you are asked to suggest a new policy controversy that might be interesting to debate. You will complete this assignment by framing the issue in a brief paragraph, and sending me a citation for an interesting article that frames the issue and could be used as a reading. We will vote for our debate topic using your submitted ideas. Please see the handout for detailed guidelines on how to complete this assignment.

* Debate (10%)

You will sign up to be a debater for one of the 15 topics. Debates will be held during class. The number of debaters per side per topic will depend on the class size. You’ll be expected to introduce brief arguments and then respond to the arguments presented by the opposition. Students in the class will also participate in the discussion. These debates are meant to be fun and lively, but also collegial and respectful. Please see the handout for details on the in-class debate format, guidelines on how to prepare, and instructions for accessing the signup sheet.

* Examinations (0%)

There is no final exam in this class. If you wish to improve your grade, I will allow you to submit up to 2 additional essays and up to 2 additional topic assignments. These will be due before the end of the final exam period assigned by the registrar (May 6, 6:30pm).

Your resubmissions must cover separate topics from the ones you have chosen for the core class assignments. I will replace the lowest grade assignment(s) with your resubmissions(s). For example, if your essay grades are 80, 85, 87, 90, and 92, and you submit two makeup essays that I grade as 85 and 93, then I will replace the 80 with an 85 and the 85 with a 93. Your new essay grades will be: 85, 87, 90, 92, 93. If you are happy with your grade in the course, then you don’t need to do any resubmissions.

*Communications*

Please feel free to contact me or Dhiraj by attending our office hours (zoom links in eLC) or through email. ***We expect email communications to follow basic professional standards*** (e.g., please don’t start your email with “Hey!”) See this footnote[[2]](#footnote-2) for very useful guidance on how to email a professor (or anyone else you’re reaching out to in a professional capacity). TLDR: every email should have a beginning (Dear Professor McCullough), a middle (who you are, what your question is, what steps you have already taken on your own to resolve the question, what you would like for me to consider/do to help), and an end (closing greeting followed by your name, please don’t just rely on your signature).

I will do my best to respond to an email request during business hours promptly. I do not monitor my email as closely during the evenings and over weekends, so please plan accordingly.

If you miss a lecture and want to find out what you missed, please ask another student in the class. Please do not email me or the TA to ask for a recap of what you missed in lecture (or, worse, whether you “missed anything important”). That said, if you missed class due to a personal or family emergency, we are happy to work with you to get you caught up.

I encourage you to “attend” my office hours via zoom. The zoom link to my office hours is on the syllabus & eLC. When you enter, you will be placed into a waiting room and I’ll admit you as soon as I can. If you have any problems accessing office hours, please let me know by email.

**Outline of Topics**

1. **You’ve got the whole world in your shopping cart: the power and limits of consumer choice**
   1. Is fair trade really more fair?
   2. The palm oil trap
   3. Food waste: would cutting it back reduce world hunger?
2. **Technology: friend or foe in the challenge to feed the world**
   1. Green Revolution: miracle or disaster?
   2. The robots will feed you now
   3. Can genetic engineering secure our food supply?
3. **Agriculture’s fuzzy boundaries**
   1. Should we use food to fuel our cars?
   2. Water wars in arid regions
   3. Will the superbugs take us out?
4. **The trend is not our friend**
   1. The globesity epidemic
   2. Is agriculture a climate change victim or perpetrator?
   3. Saving the seeds: genetic resources and our global food supply
5. **Agriculture is our future**
   1. Does the dollar-a-day poverty definition mean anything at all?
   2. How do we know what works in the global fight against poverty?
   3. New models in international development

1. I will be available on my Office Hours Zoom account. No need to let me know in advance. When you enter, you will be placed in a waiting room and I will accommodate you as soon as I can. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Please see the following URLs for great guidance on emailing a professor:

   <https://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>

   https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)